

**13<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON MENTAL HEALTH & SPIRITUALITY**  
**By Kimberli Washington, Public Information Office**



The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) held its 13<sup>th</sup> annual full-day conference on mental health and spirituality, entitled *The Year of Transformation*, on Thursday, May 29, 2014. Over 500 attended the event that took place at *Concourse Hall*, inside the Los Angeles Convention Center. The annual conference is for clergy members who want to learn about mental health issues to better serve their congregants and mental health workers who want to learn more about using spirituality in treatments. All faiths were welcome to participate in the conference funded by the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA).



Edward Vidaurri, L.C.S.W., LACDMH District Chief, emceed and introduced the speakers for the day which began with a *Call to Prayer* by Hafuz Ameer, Chanter at Islamic Center of Inland Empire and Alberto Fayad, Lead Chanter of St. Nicholas Antiochian Orthodox Cathedral. The invocation was given by Rabbi Susan Goldberg of Wilshire Boulevard Temple.



LACDMH Director Marvin Southard, D.S.W., received a special recognition award and gave a welcoming speech along with LACDMH Conference Chair, Adrienne Cedro-Hament, L.C.S.W. and Entertainment Industries Council, Inc. (EIC) Program Manager, Adel Nur. The morning keynote speaker was Fr. Luke Dysinger, O.S.B., who spoke about *Christian Spiritual Practices in Clinical Perspective*, with a focus on different meditation practices.



The conference presented eight morning and afternoon concurrent workshop sessions that included: *The Role of Spirituality in the Recovery of Persons with Substance Use and Co-Occurring Mental Health Disorders*; *Does Spirituality Belong? Where? How?*; *Prevention and Response Workshop for Faith Community Members Responding to Victims of Sexual Abuse*; *Buddhism and the Promotion of Wellness*; *Spirituality-Infused Wellness & Recovery Services: Promoting Hope and Connections*; *Integrating Culture and Spirituality Within a Holistic Treatment Approach for Urban American Indians/Alaska Natives with Mental Health Problems*; *Partnerships Transforming our Faith and Mental Health Communities* and *Hinduism and Mental Health: A Review*.



“The focus of this conference is to attempt to build bridges, connections and collaborations between department programs (LACDMH) and faith communities. Informing them on what we do and giving them information on working with people with mental health and emotional problems because they are more likely to go to their spiritual leaders than us,” said LACDMH’s Edward Vidaurri, L.C.S.W.



The afternoon keynote speaker was Oscar Wright, Ph.D. and spoke on the subject of *Break the Chains of Spiritual Depression*. The conference concluded with a closing ceremony by Simran Kaur Khalsa, Dikh Dharma Minister and benediction by Fr. Alexei Smith of St. Andrew’s Russian Greek Catholic Church.